



United States Embassy

Fact Sheet

Culture of Lawfulness

Culture of Lawfulness (COL) programs carried out through the Merida Initiative aim to instill a sense of individual responsibility to uphold the rule of law in Mexico, with the larger goal of reducing crime and corruption. COL projects promote civic participation, efficient public services, and government transparency. To that end, the Embassy's Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) works in the following areas, in partnership with civil society, public institutions, media, and the private sector.

Instilling a Culture of Lawfulness in Mexican Youth

- COL education is now part of 29 states' junior high school curricula. During the 2011-2012 school year, 7,645 schools gave COL instruction to 698,898 students; in the 2012-13 school year, it is estimated that 776,251 students in 8,715 schools will take the course. Schools that teach the COL course report fewer fights, better communication between students, greater knowledge about the rule of law and bullying, and more respect for school regulations.
- The web portal of civil society organization México Unido Contra la Delincuencia (MUCD), <http://www.culturadelalegalidad.org.mx/>, provides information about COL programs to almost 14,000 visitors per month. MUCD also promotes COL through social networks, with 25,813 followers on Facebook and 5,037 followers on Twitter.
- This academic year, 77 high school students are participating in "Jóvenes en Acción," a youth exchange focused on community service. The students spent five weeks in the United States developing leadership skills. Afterwards, they returned to their communities to implement service projects that address issues such as social inclusion, bullying, and drug abuse.
- In 2013-14, the Monterrey civil society organization Centro de Estudios sobre la Enseñanza y el Aprendizaje del Derecho will create college-level COL course materials suitable for inclusion in university curricula across Mexico.
- The El Paso-based non-profit Alliance for Border Collaboratives is developing a pilot COL program for fifth and sixth-grade schoolchildren in at-risk communities in Ciudad Juárez.

Increasing Government Transparency and Accountability

- MUCD placed citizens' watch booths in 73 Mexico City district attorney's offices, and staffed them with observers who provided information to people reporting crimes. The observers surveyed over 15,000 people in 14 months about the services they received, and reported the results. The project improved customer service and decreased corruption in many locations.
- The Ciudad Juárez-based NGO Plan Estratégico Juárez runs a number of programs aimed at increasing citizen participation in the municipality, including a program in which citizens monitor the work and voting records of the 18 city councilpersons.

Training Law Enforcement and Public Servants to Promote the Rule of Law

Through a grant to the Washington, D.C.-based non-profit organization National Strategy Information Center (NSIC), COL programming has reached thousands of Mexican public servants:

- The former Secretariat of Public Security (SSP) committed to creating an institutional culture providing incentives for employees to show integrity, respect for citizen rights, and support for the rule of law. A 40-hour COL course has been taught to over 12,000 patrolmen and officers.

- The Federal Electric Company (CFE) has given COL training to over 8,500 employees, and the Secretariat of Public Administration (SFP) has taught 3,100 federal employees in 88 offices.
- At the state level, fifteen master trainers have prepared over 90 instructors to teach COL principles to police. Over 8,500 officers in Baja California, Nuevo León, Chihuahua, and Coahuila have received COL education. In addition, the Mexico City Attorney General's office has provided COL education to 2,800 prosecutors and investigators.

Coordinating Culture of Lawfulness Programs with the Private Sector, Civil Society, and Media

- In partnership with the Mexican government, NSIC has worked with the cities of Puebla, Ensenada, and Aguascalientes to implement a “multi-sector” COL project, aiming to create city-wide COL campaigns by coordinating efforts with the private sector, civil society, and media.